

# **Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) to Continue Operation of the Compliance Assistance Center for the Chemical Industry**

## **I. Summary**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has funded the development and operation of several national compliance assistance centers (Centers) to aid small and medium size businesses to better understand and comply with environmental regulations. Currently, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance funded the establishment of 10 of these centers. In accordance with EPA policy encouraging competition for assistance agreements, the Agency has decided to pilot the use of competitive procedures for awarding Centers cooperative agreements. This request for an initial proposal (RFIP) solicits applications from non-profit organizations and universities. To be considered, initial proposals meeting the criteria described below must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003. In the second step, or Request for Final Proposal (RFP), EPA will invite all applicants whose initial proposals met the threshold criteria to submit a more detailed proposal to effectively continue the expansion and management of an on line compliance assistance center serving the needs of the chemical industry.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number and title for this project is #66.305.

An estimate of the Federal funds available for this award is \$925,000 over a 5-year period. EPA will initially fund on a one year basis and will consider funding the balance of the yearly budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities.

## **II. Background**

The purpose of the RFIP is to solicit applications from non-profit organizations and universities to develop and manage ChemAlliance, an on-line compliance assistance center for the Chemical industry. In 1997, the Office of Compliance signed a Cooperative Agreement with Michigan Technological University (MTU) to develop and manage ChemAlliance, an on-line compliance assistance center for the Chemical industry. MTU in turn enlisted the support of two sub-recipients, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the University of Wisconsin. The ChemAlliance web site was launched in October 1998 and since then, MTU and its partners have been providing compliance assistance services to the chemical industry. EPA's Cooperative Agreement with MTU terminated in June 2001. In July 2001, EPA awarded the Cooperative Agreement to the Battelle Memorial Institute Pacific North West Division to continue the management & development of ChemAlliance. Under the Grants Competition Policy that went into effect October 1, 2002, EPA now competes any assistance agreement that will provide the recipient more than \$75,000 in a year.

In pursuant of the competitive procedures for awarding Cooperative Agreement, the Agency

is now seeking initial proposals for a compliance assistance center that will continue to deliver and enhance web compliance assistance services directed to the chemical industry beginning July 2003. The funding for the first year of operation will be approximately \$150,000. Please note that under 40 CFR 30.36, EPA can obtain data and other works from the current ChemAlliance web site and provide it to the successful applicant in this competition, if necessary.

### **III. Purpose of ChemAlliance**

EPA will award financial assistance to the successful applicant in the form of a cooperative agreement. As authorized by 31 U.S.C. §6305, EPA will be substantially involved in carrying out this project. Anticipated substantial involvement will include collaboration in carrying out the scope of work, technical assistance, approval of the substantive terms of contracts and subawards made with EPA funds, change of key personnel, and approval of project phases prior to continuation of the project.

The Agreement will be funded on a "multi-media" basis under Section 103 of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §7403, Section 104 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1254, Section 8001 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, 42 U.S.C. §6981, Section 10 of the Toxic Substances Control Act, as amended, 15 U.S.C. §2609, and Section 20 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, as amended, 7 U.S.C. §136r. Applicants are encouraged to review these statutes and ensure that all of the activities contained in their proposals are consistent with the scope of EPA's authority.

### **IV. Technical Components**

Currently, the ChemAlliance web site is operated using the following types of equipment and software. As a result, the Agency is looking for candidates that have, at a minimum, the following capabilities:

1. The web site is located on a shared Pentium-III equipped server running version 4 of Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS 4.0) software, operating on Windows NT Server 4.0.
2. Site administration is performed using Microsoft Front Page 2000, and most pages on the site utilize so-called Front Page Server Extension components, most notably the use of server side include files for header and footer functions.
3. Many key functions of the ChemAlliance site, including the news capability, "Expert Help", Virtual Plant Tour, regulatory glossary and web links database, are written using the Active Server Pages (ASP) scripting environment, using VBScript as the primary scripting language.
4. Database content in ChemAlliance is stored in a relational database created using MS

Access 97 as the database environment.

5. Database access to the scripting environment is provided using the Active Data Objects (ADO) object model.
6. Client-side scripting (used primarily for the virtual plant tour and other pages where "rollover" effects are utilized) are written in JavaScript for cross-platform compatibility.
7. The ChemAlliance regulatory discussion list is hosted on a separate list server, running the commercial (non-demo) version of Lyris ([www.lyris.com](http://www.lyris.com)).

For additional information regarding the current compliance assistance center for the chemical industry, please visit [www.chemalliance.org](http://www.chemalliance.org).

## **V. Applicant Eligibility**

Applicants must be a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 96-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Colleges, universities, and community colleges are eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations as described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs is not applicable to this request for an initial proposal.

## **VI. Required Application and Threshold Criteria Information**

There is no standard governmental form for interested parties to use when submitting their initial proposal. The prospective grantee must include the following general information.

- Name of Organization
- Description of Organization (associated members, if any, purpose/function of the organization)
- Address, City, State and Zip
- Telephone and Facsimile Number
- Responsible Official with email address

Eligible and interested parties are invited to provide EPA with verifiable documentation indicating how their organization meets **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- Applicant can demonstrate that it has a financial management and time management system in place that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular (A-21 for Universities and A-122 for non profit organizations).

- Applicant can demonstrate that an indirect cost rate has been approved by a federal agency or has an approved cost allocation system that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular.
- Applicant can demonstrate a previous working relationship(s) with experts and national organizations to serve as the “first-stop shop” for the chemical industry by providing easy to understand compliance information tailored specifically for the chemical industry.
- Applicant can create linkages between the chemical businesses and the compliance assistance provider communities through the Internet.
- Applicant can provide a forum where the chemical industry can share tools and knowledge and prevent duplicative efforts.
- Applicant can continue to develop content (including technical, regulatory, and pollution prevention information) that will address the changing needs of the chemical industry.

Response to these six criteria should be no greater than ten (10) pages. The RFIP must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003. Applicants must clearly mark any data that the applicant considers being Confidential Business Information (CBI). If necessary, EPA will make final confidential business information determinations under 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

## **VII. Pre-application Assistance**

Eligible and interested applicants may contact Joseph Hall (202 564-2271) with questions regarding eligibility and threshold criteria. The Agency will post answers to significant or frequently asked questions on <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>. Applicants are encouraged to review these questions and answers prior to submitting their initial proposals.

## **VIII. Evaluation Process**

An EPA evaluation panel will review the initial proposals on a “pass/fail” basis and make recommendations to senior management in the Office of Compliance. Applicants must meet the eligibility of **all** six threshold criteria to be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal. The EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants of the RFIP.

All successful applicants that met the threshold criteria will be requested to submit a more detailed final proposal for the continued operation of the compliance assistance center for the chemical industry. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose final proposal best meets the criteria as set out in the Request for Final Proposal. The Request for Final Proposal package can be found at:

<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>

## **IX. Initial Proposal Submission**

Interested applicants can submit their application package by mail, email, or facsimile no later than 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003 to:

Mr. Joseph Hall (2224A)  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Compliance  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Information submitted to address the six threshold criteria should not exceed ten (10) total pages. Applicants meeting all criteria will be invited to submit a proposal for the continued operation of the compliance assistance center for the chemical industry. The EPA expects to notify all applicants of their eligibility to continue onto the final proposal by June 18, 2003. Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See website at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>). EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no award.